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Mrs Amanda Bannister
Executive Headteacher
Colleges Nursery School
Campkin Road
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB4 2LD

Dear Mrs Bannister

Short inspection of Colleges Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your leadership is extremely effective and your positive approach is greatly appreciated by parents, staff and governors. You, your leadership team and governors are ambitious and aspirational for each child. This shared focus on achieving the best outcomes shapes all school improvement actions. A parent, responding to Ofsted's online survey, said, 'Colleges is a warm, nurturing environment. The staff engage the children in their learning and help them to flourish.'

Since the last inspection, a formal federation with Brunswick Nursery School, where you were headteacher, has been established and is now known as the Cambridge Nursery Federation. You are executive headteacher of both schools. You have established excellent partnership working between the schools and senior leaders: this has ensured that the school has moved forward at pace. The federation has a single governing body. Governors effectively support the work of the school and provide appropriate challenge for you and the staff. Governors say that there is now cohesion, that the schools' partnership work has ensured the same high expectations at both settings. You have also developed the school as a teaching school alongside a number of other nursery schools in Cambridgeshire.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise children's achievement and build on existing strengths in teaching. All areas to develop have been successfully implemented. You have put in place highly effective systems of observation and planning, which are carried out 'in the moment', where staff use their expert knowledge to seize opportunities for children to progress. Staff sensitively approach children's play, extending learning by understanding and using children's ideas. For example, as children made potions, staff suggested that they write the recipe and then explore the sounds that letters represent in words, greatly promoting their early literacy skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that everyone at school has a rigorous approach towards safeguarding and you are determined that children are safe and well cared for. Leaders do not shy away from having difficult conversations or following up something that is not easy, because they want the best for children. There are well-developed strategies to keep children safe and support them in learning how to keep themselves safe, including understanding risk. Staff and governors receive appropriate training for safeguarding and know their responsibilities with respect to the protection of children.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. My first line of enquiry was to establish how well leaders are ensuring that teaching and learning are effectively supporting children to achieve their potential.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning regularly takes place and is rigorously evaluated. The monitoring identifies the effectiveness of activities and areas to improve further, which are followed up.
- Staff challenge pupils to achieve their potential through effective questioning that supports by interacting and extending learning. They accurately access this learning. Together with information from parents and other professionals, they plan spontaneously and draw out children's knowledge there and then. This happens because they are aware of when to stand back and when to support through appropriate activities led by adults.
- The high-quality learning environment supports teaching and learning, both inside and outside. We saw children being ably supported to describe, explore and challenge themselves. Governors explain that they know that children are achieving their potential, saying: 'Children are not flying under the radar, because leaders are ensuring that all children have opportunities so that they can soar high.'
- Another line of enquiry looked at how effectively leaders are spending the additional funding for disadvantaged children.
- The in-school data shows that these children achieved as well or better than their peers, because learning is personalised to their individual needs. The staff closely

track the impact of specific skills within school. For example, the school recently took a group of children on a bus to central Cambridge to have a picnic and another group to the library. By extending experiences for children, they are widening their aspirations, and building their confidence and their understanding of the world around them.

- In addition, I looked at how well all leaders evaluate the school's work and plan for ongoing improvements.
- You and your leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school and its overall effectiveness. You are very aware of how to ensure continual improvement, making sure that it is measurable and ambitious for the community as a whole. For example, you identified that online assessments needed to be moderated for consistency across the two schools and between staff. You ensured that staff revisited their findings, looked for the impact of any changes and discussed what else could be improved to ensure the best outcomes for children. You have identified that this process could be improved by developing an online scrapbook, which parents could access to contribute information about their children's achievements outside of school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- federation working is further strengthened through securing accurate assessments and developing an online scrapbook, which parents can use.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Cassandra Williams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you and senior leaders, where we looked at a range of documents including learning journeys, assessment data, development plans and evaluations. I held meetings with safeguarding leaders. I observed learning in all the rooms and outdoors across the morning and afternoon sessions. I evaluated progress over time by looking at records of learning. I had a discussion with three governors. I talked to the local authority representative. I evaluated recent information about children's progress. I took into account the views of staff through their responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. I considered the views of parents through face-to-face discussions and responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, 'Parent View'.